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August 5, 1987

Mr. David Giorosa
76 Durfey Street
New Bedford, MA 02740

Dear Mr. Giorosa,

Frank Ciavattieri, EPA Project Manager for the New Bedford Harbor Superfund site, relayed to me your concern regarding possible PCB air emissions in the Greater New Bedford Harbor area. Unfortunately I was unable to talk to you directly to determine your exact concerns, however I will try to explain what we currently know about the level of PCBs in the air around New Bedford Harbor, what additional air monitoring is being planned for this area and what the current exposure to PCBs in the air may be.

A number of air studies have been performed in the New Bedford Harbor area. These studies were conducted to identify areas of high PCB contamination and to document PCB air concentrations at these locations. These studies show a range of PCB levels in the air with the higher levels of PCBs detected near the areas of highest contamination (i.e., near the mudflats in the estuary (at low tide)). The air data, however, does not provide PCB concentrations in areas where people reside.

Because the PCB air levels in residential areas have not been determined, and because the potential release of PCBs into the air during proposed pilot dredging and disposal study is a concern, EPA is in the process of developing an air monitoring program for the New Bedford Harbor area. This program proposes to place air monitoring devices throughout the harbor area including residential areas near the mudflats. The PCB concentrations detected at these sampling points will provide a better indication of whether or not people are exposed to PCBs from the air. EPA is also in the process of developing "target levels" of PCBs. These "target levels" will be used by EPA to monitor the clean-up operations. The air monitoring program and "target levels" are being developed to ensure that the people living in New Bedford Harbor are not exposed to levels of PCBs that would pose a health concern.

As you know the Greater New Bedford Harbor Health Effects Study (GNBHES) determined the PCB blood levels of randomly

selected individuals from the Greater New Bedford Harbor area. The study showed that only 1.3% of the total participants in the study had elevated serum PCB levels (defined as greater than or equal to 30 ppb or 0.000030 PCBs per liter of blood). The study also showed that the mean PCB blood level for the participants was 6 ppb. The conclusions of this study state:

"It is noteworthy that relatively few persons had elevated serum levels of PCB. This seems to indicate very little evidence of above normal exposure to PCBs among residents of the Greater New Bedford area."

Exposure to PCBs referred to in this study include exposure to PCB air emissions in addition to exposure through the consumption of contaminated fish and/or any other route of exposure. Therefore the conclusion that there is, "little evidence of above normal exposure to PCBs", implies that exposure to PCB air emissions is not above normal. If there was significant levels of PCBs in the air, higher PCB blood levels would be expected. (I have enclosed a copy of the Greater New Bedford PCB Health Effects Study 1984-1987 for your review).

I hope this letter answers your concerns. If you have any additional questions you can reach me by phone at (617) 245-6606.

Sincerely,

Beth Ryan

Beth Ryan
Toxicologist

cc: Frank Ciavattieri, EPA Region I

Enclosure